

Women in Zimbabwe

A gift to the world

COMPILER'S COMMENTS

Before I found God's plan for my life, I had to be everything that others were. Most of the time, I did not find the joy and fulfillment I desired because it was *me* at the center of my life and not God. I finally came to a point where I needed to clear things up with God. I had 24 hours a day like everyone else, but my life was empty. I started searching for truth and direction. What was God's will for my life? I read the Word, prayed and meditated. In the meantime, life had to go on as I balanced family and church life with my teaching career.

They are just waiting to be tapped," by Linder Faber, resident of Zimbabwe at the time. "Awake to the realisation of who you are in God's sight. Put on strength. Dream big dreams and be galvanized into action. Be alert and react to the situations around you," by Maureen Mnkandla from Zimbabwe.

The whole week was packed with powerful messages God had entrusted to willing vessels. I remember sitting through the final communion service and crying as I fully acknowledged the price that God's son had paid for my debt. The flow of tears lasted three days. I couldn't stop crying. Nothing that I could ever do could make up for the pain of hanging on the cross which Jesus bore for me. I was truly broken. I went away from that conference feeling like I had gone through a baptism into ministry. Soon after that, at an Aglow Women's Fellowship meeting, a Zambian sister challenged us when talking about the donkey which carried Jesus into Jerusalem. She said, "Be loosed. God wants to use you to take the message of the Good News to the streets of your town."

I was not alone in the search for direction. There were other women walking the same road as I was. It has been my joy, strength and privilege to watch many women shake off the bondage that prevented them from active ministry and find their niche in life. These women have walked out in boldness and are making a difference where God has placed them.

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In 1987–88 there was a great revival among women on the African continent. Pan Africa Christian Women Alliance (PACWA) was formed. Seven Pre-PACWA conferences were held in both the Anglophone and Francophone Africa, with a big continental gathering in August 1989. The theme was "Our Time Has Come." Our time had come to find the woman's place in God's plan. Though I only attended the Southern Africa Regional meeting in Harare, the impact of that revival hit me hard. Some of the quotes said by the speakers at that memorable event have remained with me: "I am happy to be a woman. I am God's latest model, and he has a plan for my life," by Judy Mbugua from Kenya. "I have been chosen by God for himself, out of the world and for a special service. No one will do the job God has set aside for me. All the resources I need to do it have been made available.

Doris Dube and her husband Jethro are Co-country Representatives for MCC in Zimbabwe. A writer and former teacher, she also serves as the Africa Editor for Mennonite World Conference. She has published children's books and a collection of Zimbabwean and Zambian women's stories. She is the mother of three boys and twin girls, ranging from 11 to 21 years of age.

They are not taking anyone else's job or position. They are where they are called to be. In the following pages some of these women will be sharing the joys and challenges of being where God has placed them. Their different ministries all dovetail to form one beautiful picture of God at work among his people. What they are can perhaps be best described in the words of a Congolese brother who recently said, "I may have been born and brought up in the Congo, but I don't

belong there. I am a gift to the world." What a tremendous statement: A gift to the world! I too have found my niche. I have come a long way from the days of searching. I believe this is where God would have me be for now. I write for him. I don't belong to Zimbabwe. I am a gift to the world! So are the women who have shared their stories here.

—compiled by Doris Dube

FROM THE

According to the membership totals for the year 2000, the numbers of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in Africa have nearly bypassed those in North America. I have heard it said that the average Mennonite is an African woman. In Zimbabwe, there are nearly 25,000 members of the Brethren in Christ church.

My American education has left me with little knowledge of the history of Zimbabwe. I felt the need, while reading these stories, to know more about the place where these women live, and I did a little research. Zimbabwe is located in southern Africa between South Africa and Zambia. At the beginning of the first millennium AD this region was inhabited by Neolithic hunter-gatherers related to the San or "Bushmen" people. One of the first-known major civilizations established there was the Mwene Mutapa. By the 1400's, it included most of the Rhodesian Plateau

and present-day Mozambique. Its wealth was based on iron smelting, textiles, gold, copper, and agriculture. In the early 16th century, the Portuguese arrived and began a series of wars which left this empire very weakened. By 1690 the Portuguese had been forced off the plateau and much of the land formerly under Mwene Mutapa rule was controlled by the Rozwi empire. Peace and prosperity reigned over the next two centuries and the centers of Dhlo-Dhlo, Khami, and Great Zimbabwe reached their peaks. In the mid-19th century, Zimbabwe came under Ndebele rule. A treaty was signed with the British South Africa Company in 1888 allowing them to mine gold in the kingdom. The great influx of European settlers as a result of this treaty led to war in 1893 and the Ndebele were defeated. Britain annexed Zimbabwe (then called Southern Rhodesia) from the South Africa Company in 1923. In 1930 a land act was passed which excluded Africans from ownership of the best farming land. The labor law, carried in 1934, prohibited Africans from entering skilled trades and professions. As a consequence, Africans were forced to work for subsistence wages on white farms, mines and factories. A 1961 constitution was formulated to keep whites in power. In 1965 the government unilaterally declared its independence, but Britain did not recognize the act and demanded voting rights for the African majority in the country. United Nations sanctions and a guerrilla uprising finally led to free elections in 1979 and independence in 1980.

Today, Zimbabwe is made up of 11.2 million people. The average life expectancy is 38 years with women's life expectancy slightly lower at 36 years. The mortality

The MCC Committees on Women's Concerns believe that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. By sharing information and ideas, the committees strive to promote new relationships and corresponding supporting structures through which women and men can grow toward wholeness and mutuality. Articles and views presented in REPORT do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Committees on Women's Concerns.

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rate has been greatly affected by the AIDS epidemic. The unemployment rate is 50%. Land rights issues have exacerbated to the point of some blacks forcibly occupying white-owned farms with hopes of spurring land reforms. It is also a country of great beauty and culture. Zimbabwe boasts the famous Victoria Falls. It is the home of Great Zimbabwe, the greatest medieval

city of sub-Saharan Africa. The capital of Harare lodges the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, called the final word on African art and material culture. In the midst of this history and reality, the women in this issue of *Report* minister to their church and community with faith and hope.

—Debra Gingerich, editor

Note: Information gathered from Internet Africa, Yahoo.com Reference, Lonely Planet, and New African Yearbook.

Women in business

At an early age I developed an interest in sewing. My mother was a domestic science teacher. She took me with her to school. At the tender age of six years, I could join two pieces of fabric with a needle and thread. Little did I know that this was the prelude to greater things and fortune.

In primary school, needlework was one of my favorite subjects, and I did very well at it. I would sneak and use my mother's hand sewing machine to put together outfits. By secondary school, where we were allowed to use machines, I was discovering my talent and knew I could sew presentable garments. Surprisingly I did not pursue that talent when I left the country for further studies. I did a secretarial course to diploma level. Later I studied business management.

I married a United Nations diplomat. Because of our status, I was not allowed to work formally. Instead I did a lot of charity work. I started a family and did some dressmaking as a hobby. There was no way of escaping the attention of other women in the circles in which I moved. Other diplomat's wives always wanted the outfits I made for myself. I sewed and developed my talent but managed my time well so that none of my responsibilities were neglected.

It was a new revelation to me. By doing what I was good at, rather than struggling with other ventures, I performed at a high level. God reinforced in me that I should

use the talent he gave me. I was not to bury it. So from very small beginnings something good developed. I felt that God had set great plans for my life. At this point my husband was not so keen about me spending so much time sewing. He used to say, "Please take it easy with the sewing."

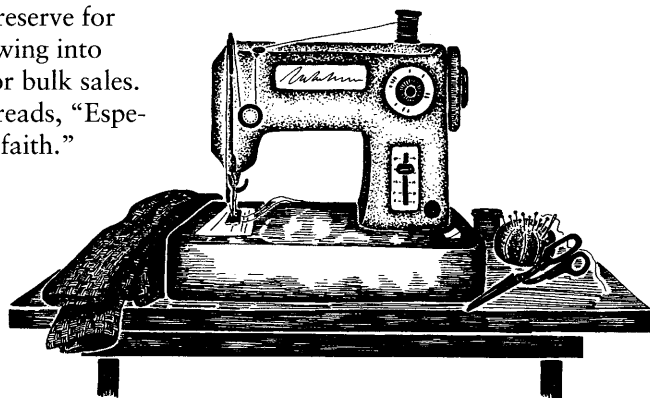
When we returned to Zimbabwe and I was a full-time housewife, I continued with my hobby. God must have been talking to my husband about me because one morning a month away from my birthday, he invited me to go into town with him. We went into a certain office. Handing me some documents, he said, "Happy Birthday, my dear." He had bought me a ladies' wear shop and a sewing factory. I couldn't believe it. The factory was well equipped with machines, and I could start business right away. So on March 1, 2000, I became the proud owner of *Elegant Fashions*. I praised God for this gift and asked for wisdom in running this business. I also did not wish to disappoint my husband who had given so generously. He had enabled me to break into the business world, a former preserve for men only. I went full swing into work. I manufacture for bulk sales. The business tag label reads, "Especially made for you by faith."

I have a staff of 12. We have very good working relations. At the start of the day, we gather for prayer. God has

by Faith Moyo

Faith Moyo is a business woman. She is a member of the Bulawayo Central Brethren In Christ Church.

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blessed this venture. I have learned many things from the Lord since we set up business. Even though our country is going through a lot of problems, we are pulling through. The business is sustaining itself. God has provided in such a way that we have not yet needed to borrow money from the bank.

I work very hard, but I have learned to manage my time. I am with my family after work. We sit at the table together for dinner and then have our prayers before we go to bed. I also help them with homework when they need it. Praise the Lord, one of my children has made it to university in Central Michigan and, God willing, my last one, the girl, will attend university next year.

There is a lot to be gained from running a business according to Christian principles. Gender issues can become a problem if not controlled. I believe the bible says we should humble ourselves before our husbands. My business has grown because I always consult my husband if I have a problem. He gives me good advice. Transparency also counts in a family business.

I never forget to give to God what belongs to him. My belief is that my prosperity comes from what I give back to the Lord in tithes and offerings. I am quite involved in my local congregation. I find fulfillment in working for the Lord. He never disappoints me, and I trust in him for every decision I make. I also thank God for my mother who inspired me to be what I am today. ♦

Training soul winners

by Ethel Sibanda

Ethel Sibanda serves Bulawayo Central BIC Conference as a deaconess and works full time in Evangelism Explosion. She is a gifted Sunday School teacher. She holds a Certificate in Advanced Leadership from Haggai Institute, Singapore. She was married to the late Ferdinand Sibanda. They had seven children.

I was very conscience of being a woman but those proved to be empty fears because I got support and encouragement from men as well as women.

Many people are turned off by the Gospel message when it is presented to them in a condemning way. People don't want to be told that they are sinners or that they will burn in hell. Many are drawn to God when they are told about the God of love who forgives and forgets.

My ministry with Evangelism Explosion (EE) started on New Year's Eve 1987 when the church organized a "Bring and Share" evening full of fun and fellowship. We had come together for praise and worship followed by a more solemn time when the pastor asked people to write their New Year's resolutions. One of the things I wrote was "I want to witness for Jesus," but I had no clue of how or where to witness. I was surprised when in January, my pastor at the time, Ian Wilsher, asked if I wanted to be part of a team that would do EE. I would train people and visit homes to share the Gospel. I felt sure that it was what I really wanted to do.

Two weeks into the course, God reminded me about a dream I had three years earlier where people were singing behind me,

"Give me the Bible, which will be a light at the grave." That became confirmation to me. I had already trained to win souls through the EE program. Now I had become a trainer. After serving two years in this capacity, the church called me to full-time ministry to run the EE ministry and be the pastor's "right hand person." Suddenly I thought about being a woman in that position and being above men in the church, including my husband, and I was apprehensive. I was relieved when my husband, although he doubted whether we would come through financially, said, "I do not want to stand in your way." I was very conscious of being a woman but those proved to be empty fears because I got support and encouragement from men as well as women. From that point onwards, I had a better chance to spend time discipling women because they were my special challenge. These ladies never looked back and up to today, many that I trained are very active in their local church.

The challenge in this call is seeing lay men and women move from being ordinary Christians to enthusiastic soul winners.

Throughout my 13 years of service, I have seen the hand of God changing lives and raising men and women as leaders from all walks of life.

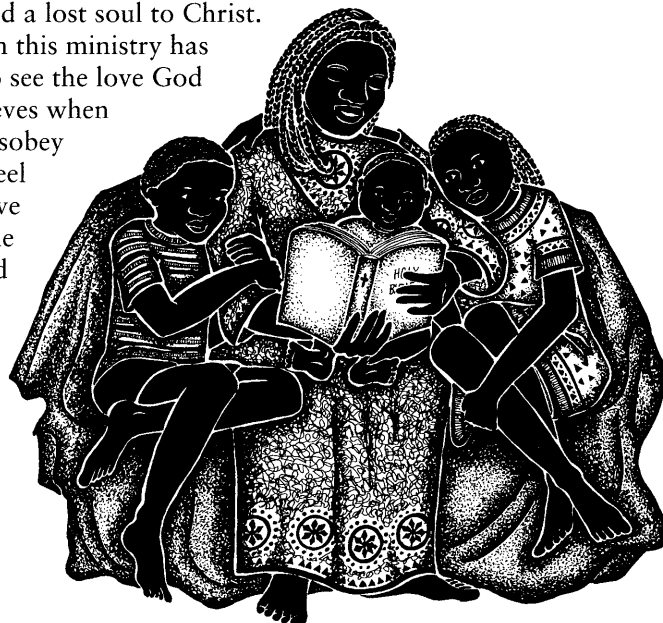
Discovering the role of women in evangelism and encouraging them in that role has been a joy. Women have the privilege of praying for the unborn and of bringing that infant up in biblical principles. Women have come to realize that they need to ensure the salvation of each of their children by praying for them. Women are involved in activities that help to meet the needs of other women on a business and social level. Therefore they have more opportunities to share their faith. Women in business, as well, have better communication skills that help them to make contacts in their business spheres. It has been my privilege to train women from all walks of life in EE.

The hardest part is balancing this kind of work with family life. I am on call 24 hours a day because training involves discipleship and follow up with new converts. Most of our training sessions are after work hours. Sometimes I leave the house feeling like I am neglecting my family, but I owe everything to my Savior and Father in heaven. He has drawn my children to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It has pleased God to use them in ministry, one on a full-time basis. They are very committed.

My church life is almost inseparable from my EE work because it involves the very life of what the church should be about. As much as it is an advantage, sometimes people feel as though I am promoting my work. It is not easy, therefore, to get my own church leaders to realize the absolute importance of this ministry. On the same token, there are some of our BIC leaders who have caught up the vision, "...but Jesus said to them, 'only in his home town and in his own house is a prophet without honor'" (Matt. 13:56).

The vision of EE is that every believer should be trained in personal evangelism—pastors, deacons, Sunday school teachers, ushers, and any person involved in any part of the church—in order to enable them to lead a lost soul to Christ. My involvement in this ministry has opened my eyes to see the love God has for us. He grieves when people reject or disobey him. Therefore I feel that all I should live for is to win people for evangelism and to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. ♦

Discovering the role of women in evangelism and encouraging them in that role has been a joy.



AIDS: The greatest challenge for me as a Christian doctor today

Recently I was a guest speaker to a lively audience of teenage girls graduating from high school, a few choir boys from a neighboring school, parents, teachers, and other guests. I had been asked to speak on the "Challenges facing the girl-child after leaving school." The content of my talk was an effort to explain social life and its problems for the girl-child in the medical context while emphasizing the importance of solutions with Christian values.

Because, in my view, the girl-child is still largely disadvantaged throughout her entire life in parts of the third world, I talked about the challenges a girl faces right from conception until she is an old woman. These included selective abortion of female fetuses in countries with a "one child per family policy," different forms of abuse, child neglect, and inheritance in favor of the boy-child. They struggle to break into male dominated professions.

by Juliet Dube-Ndebele

Dr. Juliet Dube-Ndebele is the Hospital Superintendent for Mpilo Hospital, which is one of the oldest and largest in the country. She serves on the Medical Administrative Committee of the Brethren in Christ Church. She is married to Ralph Ndebele, and they have three children.

MCC's response

MCC first initiated a program in Zimbabwe in 1980. Presently, Doris and her husband Jethro serve as country representatives. As examples of the work there, MCC offered emergency assistance after Cyclone Eline in 1999 with cement to rebuild houses and maize to replace destroyed crops. MCC provided a grant to the BIC church to help it empower its leaders. This included a seminar for pastors' wives. MCC works with the BIC church to offer AIDS education and support patients as well as caregivers and orphans. MCC's Global Family is active in Zimbabwe where it supports students in three BIC mission schools as well as other secondary schools.

Once married, they may be forbidden to follow a career or own property. They are often subject to domestic violence.

I, too, as a girl-child growing up under the care of my grandparents while my single mother was away working as a teacher, faced a lot of hurdles. However, thanks to my exposure to a strong Christian environment, teachings and guidance in a Salvation Army boarding secondary school, I was able to gain a strong faith in the Almighty. I have no doubt that I am the successful Big Boss (as my son calls me) of this large hospital with a family and reasonable good health, not because of my own doing, but because I have been trying all my life to follow the trail of God's footsteps and to seek his guidance when I falter.

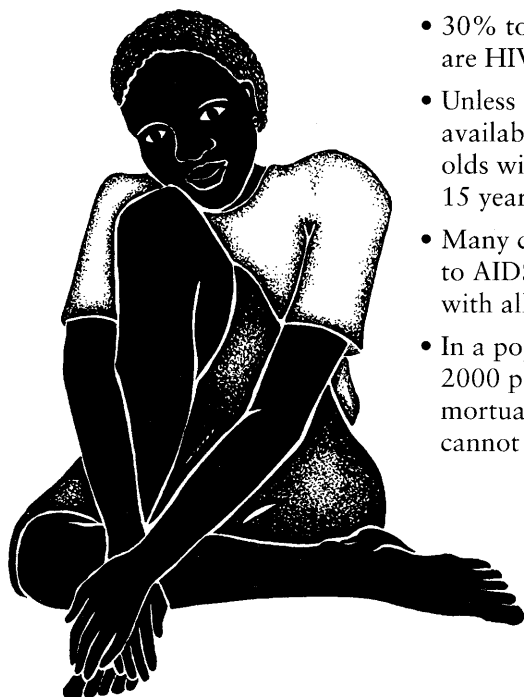
Despite the many challenges listed above, I think today there is no greater challenge than AIDS. There are challenges for me as a Christian doctor, for the young people in my community, and for those already affected by the disease. For me the main challenge is how to deal with my clients: how to balance the advice of the big health organizations and the Ministry of Health against what I believe in, how to communicate the message of God's way.

To illustrate my point about the AIDS situation in Zimbabwe, here are some frightening statistics:

- 25% of those who have already had sex are HIV positive
- 30% to 40% of the infants born today are HIV positive
- Unless a cure or vaccine is found and available, 50% of all today's 15-year-olds will die of AIDS, maybe in the next 15 years.
- Many children have been orphaned due to AIDS and head entire families or live with all sorts of relatives.
- In a population of 12 million, more than 2000 people die of AIDS per week. Our mortuaries are overflowing and families cannot bury people fast enough.

I firmly believe that the solution to AIDS lies in us as individuals, communities, nations and the entire human race going back to the basics. We need to concede that all types of education, posturing, talk of condoms and what-have-you since the 1980's are not working in Zimbabwe. I think some of our methods have worsened our situation. Many times the Ministry of Health has had to destroy millions of condoms because they did not meet standards. I may be called controversial or alarmist, but there is just no way I would trust my entire life on an ultra-thin piece of tubing with microscopic measurements for just a few minutes of pleasure! I don't subscribe to the notion that the "C" in the ABC's of AIDS control stands for "condom." It should be "control yourself." Girls could be a good starting point since a lot of the behaviors that help spread AIDS are centered around girls and women. I strongly believe that these issues can be in their control if girls receive good guidance and moral examples from an early age. Girls need to be empowered to know and exercise their legal rights and to be assertive from an early age. They should learn how to be listened to and where to go for help in cases of abuse and adversities. They should be taught to demand their rightful place as a woman when they feel they are being short-changed because of their gender. I'm not advocating for the trivialization of traditional African values. But as an educated woman, I do believe some traditional practices such as polygamy, wife inheritance (taking a deceased brother's widow as a wife), women's lack of control over their bodies, and their lack of rights to say "no" to sex or marital rape are clearly dangerous, outdated or degrading to the modern woman.

Secondly, more open communication between children and parents or guardians on subjects such as sexuality and AIDS, together with adequate attention and supervision, is an absolute necessity. I feel the most important message about AIDS should be "wait, wait, wait." This is abstinence in accordance with God's teachings. There is no other shortcut. The Bible says, "There is a season for everything." Both boys and girls should be taught to place a high value on their bodies and virginity. Even though we still do not have access to



anti-Retroviral agents in our country, we are otherwise quite advanced in terms of availability of other resources like many places where couples can go for counseling and testing, for example at Voluntary Counseling and Testing centers or Matebeleland AIDS Council, CONTACT, CONNECT, etc. before first sexual con-

tact or becoming pregnant. Once married, stay faithful for life according to God's instruction.

Of course, my plea to my fellow human beings would be not complete without advocating for prayer that we may conquer AIDS sooner than later. ♦

Girls need to be empowered to know and exercise their human rights and to be assertive from an early age.

The home-based caregiver

In 1989 my husband and I returned to Zimbabwe after completing our studies at the Theological College of Central Africa in Zambia. Our joy about being back home was only marred by finding our daughter Nokuthula pregnant out of wedlock. She had a difficult pregnancy resulting in a breech delivery. We named our miracle baby Hlengiwe in appreciation for what God had done to save her life when she could have been lost at birth. The following year we lost Nokuthula. She had fought a long and painful battle with AIDS. After the burial, as we turned away from the mound of soil that was to represent her last and permanent home on this earth, we were thankful to have Hlengiwe, a part of the daughter we had lost.

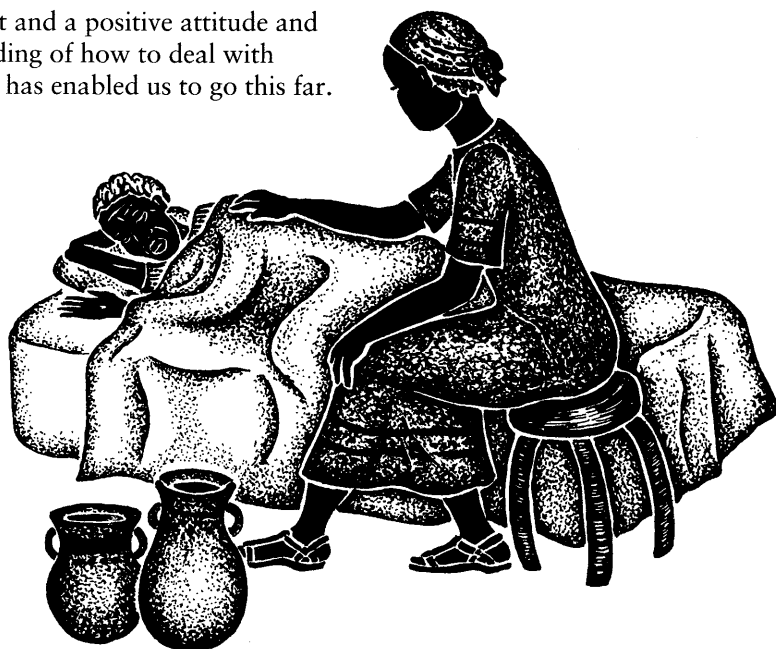
Nursing my daughter through the various stages of AIDS, right up to the end, was a difficult and painful experience for us as a family, but it was also a preparatory school for what I am involved in now. My mother-in-law and a step-sister provided me with the moral support I needed for this challenge. The resident-doctor at Mtshabezi Mission Hospital, Dr. Barlow, and the AIDS Program Co-ordinator, Elizabeth Brandt, visited us and provided material support and food for our patient. I appreciate what the doctor did for us. He and his family came to our home and gently broke the news that our daughter was HIV positive. They walked with us through the difficult stages of accepting and then being open about her condition at a time when the stigma was very pronounced, and many people did not wish

to be associated with this scourge. They taught us about AIDS. Our daughter was given all the care that she needed, and she was witnessed to. She made her peace with God and died a Christian.

Because Hlengiwe was born HIV positive, she was not expected to live beyond five years. She crossed that line, and next she was not expected to live beyond 10 years. She is now 11 years old. Everyday we thank God for letting her live for so long. She is indeed our joy. Her life has not been easy. She is weak. It is a miracle that she has lived through the killer childhood diseases especially as her system was weakened by HIV. Her greatest problem now is partial hearing loss because she has suffered from many ear ailments. She probably could use a hearing aid. We have taken special care with her diet. We believe that a good diet and a positive attitude and understanding of how to deal with HIV/AIDS has enabled us to go this far.

by Rose Mathe

Rose Mathe is a retired primary school teacher. She has a diploma from the Theological College of Central Africa in Zambia and taught briefly at Ekuphileni Bible Institute in Zimbabwe. She is a member of the Brethren in Christ Church and pastors the Enyandeni congregation.



For me, being involved in this way presents no problem. I have no fears or doubts about what to do. I am called to love and care for my fellow people unconditionally.

She is now in grade six and really enjoys school on those days when she is well.

Nursing my daughter was my own school of training. As the pain of my loss diminished and as I got better control of caring for my granddaughter, I started looking around me and saw many people caring for their loved ones at home. The hospitals could no longer cope with the care of all its patients. Many were being sent home to be cared for under the Home-Based Care Program. I started visiting those with sick relatives, but I was not connected with the Home-Based Care AIDS Program. I just went as a neighbor or as a friend or family. As more and more people needed to be cared for at home, I felt that I too should join the rest of the community home-based caregivers in my area of Enyandeni. We visit and care for the sick.

For me, being involved in this way presents no problem. I have no fears or doubts about what to do. I am called to love and care for my fellow people unconditionally. Among my many challenges are the times when I have sat and talked with the family of the terminally ill. At this time when they are so desperate, I give words of encouragement that Jesus still loves them and they are special in God's sight. Jesus is still saying to them, "Come unto me all that are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

At the end of 2000 when I retired from teaching, I thought my social life was coming to an end and that I would spend more time confined to my home. To my surprise, I am now exposed more to the wider community because of my work as a home-based caregiver. I spend a lot of time interacting and sharing ideas with other home-based caregivers. I spend just as much time visiting the sick and caring for them. One of their basic needs is water. When visiting the patients, we usually bring them water for bathing and cooking. We help with household jobs. Above all, we sit and talk to express our love.

I have been a preacher in my local congregation of Enyandeni since 1992. This too has been an asset to me as I am challenged by the Scriptures to go out into the world and minister to the body and soul. Jesus was never too busy for those who needed him. He reached out to those who were untouchable because of physical ailments as well as those who were social outcasts. As his follower, I have a responsibility to the sick around me.

My vision for the next few years is to mobilize other people to be trained as home-based caregivers so that we can share the workload and not burn out. My greatest desire is that the church accept that we have the sick among us and then be willing to minister to them. ♦

Omama Bosizo

by Lydia Ndlovu

Lydia Ndlovu is a retired school teacher. She is a member of Lobhengula Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe.

The women's wing of the BIC Church office in Zimbabwe is called Omama Bosizo (Women Who Help). One of the objectives of having women organized in such a way is to mobilize and equip them for service in the church side by side with men. Another objective is to equip them to be able to take good care of their homes and families. The church is growing and so is the women's ministry.

The structure of the church is such that the bishop's wife gives overall leadership and is assisted by the wives of the overseers. It is not possible for these leaders to reach all the women and give direction

to all the issues, especially at the congregational level. In every church district, therefore, women called sub-leaders are selected to bridge the gap between the leadership and the grassroots. Their role is crucial in the strength, development and growth of the congregations. The sub-leaders have to be women who can relate well to other women and be able to teach them both at home and in the church.

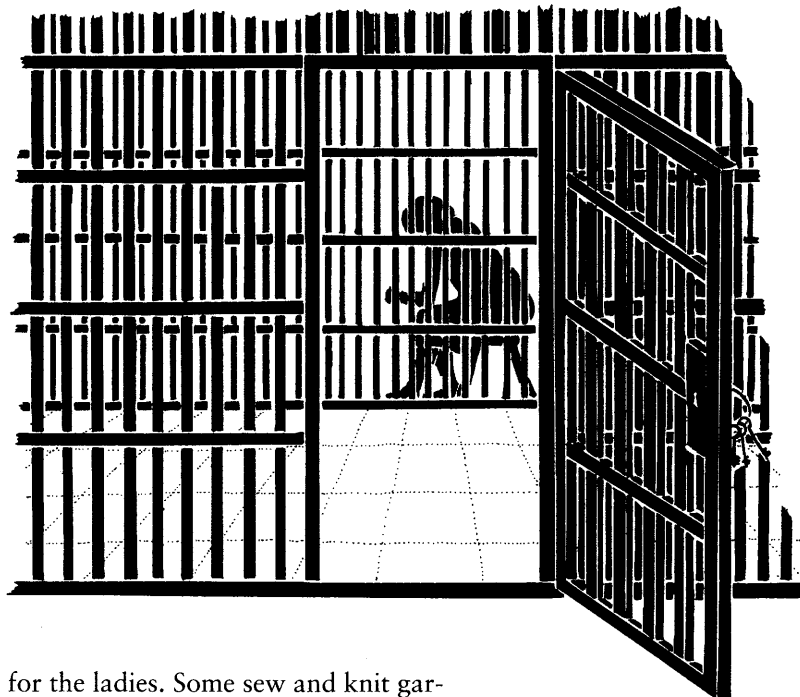
I was chosen as a sub-leader for the Bulawayo urban congregations in 1994. I have worked with three different bishop's wives. My main responsibility has been to encourage women to attend women's

meetings and participate fully in church activities. Apart from Sunday morning attendance, women are encouraged to take part in mid-week prayer meetings, visit and care for the sick at their homes and in the hospitals, attend funerals to comfort the bereaved, and be available to minister whenever the need arises.

Omama Bosizo are called to separate themselves from all the cultural practices that are in opposition to the teaching of the Word like witchcraft, ancestral worship, smoking, drinking alcohol, or taking part in any other belief which is contrary to Christianity. The women have a great call to teach and revive the souls of those who may be struggling in their walk with God in their community. The ability of the women to go into the community where the need is has been possible because they minister in love. When they come to the home of a sick person they wash the clothes of the patient, clean the house, bathe the patient and cook food for them. This, of course, depends on the level of the sickness. Sometimes all that is required is just to sit and visit with the patient or the family.

At the congregational level, we encourage the older women to teach the younger ones by example. Special lessons are prepared and taught to those who are preparing for marriage so that they may start off on good footing. When they have set up homes and are newlyweds, the older women follow up with them to offer encouragement and advice. We have seen Christian values and a dependence on God shown in most of these homes.

In obedience to the teachings of Proverbs 31, all congregations are encouraged to prepare and teach lessons to equip women in home care and income generation skills. This is a help because even those women who are not employed outside the home are equipped with self-help skills and complement the salaries brought home by their husbands by working with their hands. Some of these women have formed cooking clubs which cook at weddings, funerals and at other social gatherings. The cooking clubs are very popular because they generate a reasonable income



for the ladies. Some sew and knit garments for sale. All these self-help skills are complemented by scriptural teachings.

At Easter and Christmas, we have special gatherings where we invite guest speakers to minister to us. The annual Women's Conference, which usually coincides with Easter, has been a popular gathering in which we learn from each other through prepared speeches and testimonies. At Christmas time, women again get together for special celebrations and gift exchanges.

A new ministry which we have just started is prisoner visitation. God has blessed us in that the prison doors, which are usually closed to many, have been opened to us. We have been touched by the plight of those in prison. Some are hardened prisoners, but there are many who are languishing in prison for minor crimes. Some even give birth to children in prison and have to raise their children there if they are serving long terms. We have been allowed to go into the prisons to sing and pray with the inmates. We have seen the great material needs and been allowed to bring food and clothing to the prison. One of the joys of this ministry has been the privilege of reaching not only to the prisoners but also those who look after them.

As a sub-leader it is my responsibility to look beyond the present in promoting the women's ministries. I like to encourage the younger people to be grounded in the Word so that we may not lack when we

One of the objectives of having women organized in such a way is to mobilize and equip them for service in the church side by side with men.

A new ministry which we have just started is prisoner visitation. God has blessed us in that the prison doors, which are usually closed to many, have been opened to us.

look for leaders among them in the future. I challenge Christian parents to teach good values to their children. I am particularly concerned that young people only copy the good foreign customs. They should ignore or discard the bad ones. I continue to uphold that as a church we should strengthen and encourage visitation ministries because they have been a great tool for reaching out.

As I reflect on this ministry which God has laid on my heart, I want to acknowledge the support that my family has given me. My husband and children encourage and pray for me, especially when I am going through difficult times. They are willing to remain alone when I need to travel. This has enabled me to work freely. ♦

Where God leads me

by Barbara Nkala

Barbara Nkala is married to Shadrack and has two grown girls and a boy. She has been a teacher, writer, publisher, director of the family business, and National Director of International Bible Society Zimbabwe since May 1996. Barbara holds a B.A. from the University of South Africa and is presently pursuing an M.A. course with the Africa Leadership and Management Academy.

Most of us are like little children who are reined in during a walk as they strain away on their own course. I am no exception. Even in serving the Lord, it is always much nicer to delve into those activities that do not bring us any discomfort. It is not always joyous to follow the master's lead.

I had enjoyed serving God in my own small way. In my quest to fulfill the great commission, I used to and still do buy devotional books and then passed them on to those I believed needed to be reached for Christ or nurtured, as the Spirit directed me. I also loved to see children blossom in their knowledge of the Savior as friend of the little ones. So I taught Sunday school, and for over 20 years, I was involved in Christian Radio Broadcast on Amagugu Evangeli (Gospel Jewels) and the Voice of the Brethren in Christ broadcast on Trans World Radio in Manzini, Swaziland. I prepared and presented children's and women's programs. At a publishing house where I worked for ten years, I started a lunch-time prayer meeting on Tuesdays. Messages were shared from the Word of God. Gospel singers ministered in song, and some colleagues were transformed by the Savior in those meetings. I also obtained and passed relevant gospel tracts to those in need. But, I had never thought of working in Christian ministry full time.

On December 31, 1995, Rev. Elias Moyo of the Forest Gate BIC church in London, England preached from Isaiah 6:1-8. He challenged each member of the congrega-

tion to make resolutions for the New Year. He asked us what we would do for the Lord in 1996. The Lord says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8, NIV). I sat there thinking hard about what special things I could do to serve God, who had done so many marvelous things for me. I had a loving husband, Shadreck, and we had been blessed with three children who brought much joy into our lives. I was working with my husband in his telecommunications business, Telecontract. My working schedule was flexible and allowed me to fit in numerous other things I enjoyed doing. We were, at that time, on vacation in London. "Please tell the Lord as Isaiah did, 'Here am I Lord. Send me!'" The persuasive voice of Rev. Moyo interrupted my wandering thoughts. "Here am I Lord. Send me!" I found myself repeating that, together with many other voices in the congregation. He made us repeat that a few times. I was challenged. I honestly and earnestly wanted to serve my God. But I did not know how. My mind took another stray path. With one ear I listened to the preacher, as part of my mind frantically searched for ways I could serve God in 1996. My own planned ways, not God's. My own lead, not his reign.

For about a week, my prayer was, "Here am I Lord. Send me!" Two weeks after I got back home, I was visited by the then associate director of International Bible Society (IBS) Zimbabwe, Emily Voorhies. She had been asked to find out if I would consider becoming the national director of IBS in Zimbabwe. I listened but inwardly

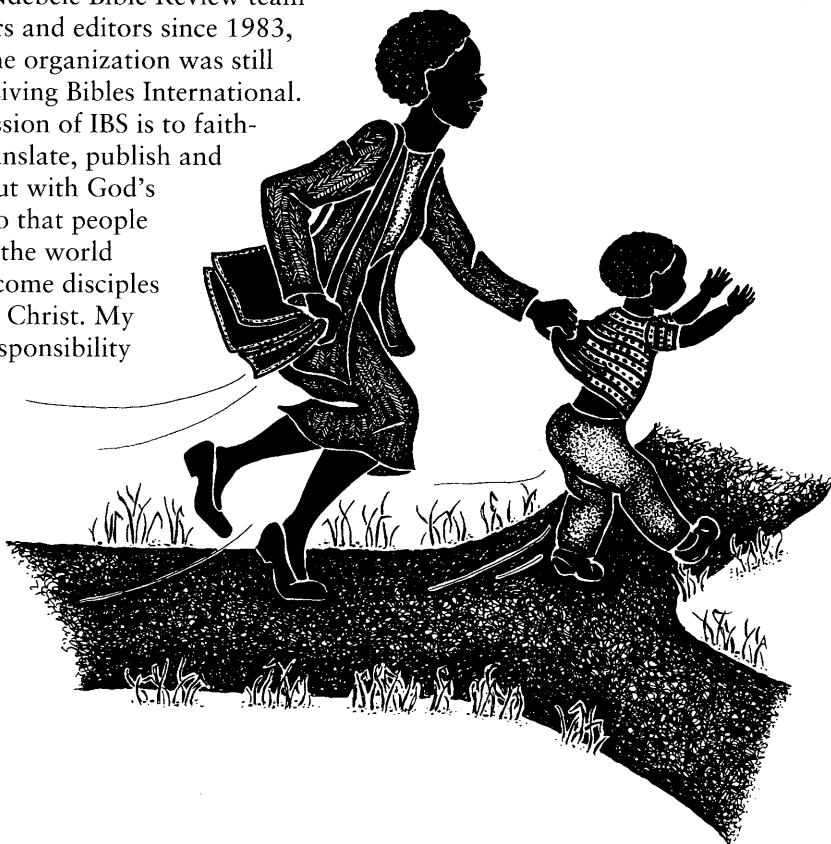
laughed off the idea. First, I thought, my place was with Shadreck to support him in his company. Secondly, I did not consider myself suited for that position. I, myself, was trying to find responsible and suitable candidates for the position since I was on the IBS board. The position had been vacant since the departure of the previous director in 1994, and no candidate recommended had met the standards required. The director based in Nairobi, which is the IBS head office in Africa, began his own search, and somebody he trusted pointed him to me. Hence the visit from Mrs. Voorhies. She asked me to pray about the proposal.

A week or so later, Betta Mengistu, the Africa area executive director, also talked to me while on a regular visit. He quoted Romans 8:14–15. I was particularly struck by the last bit, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” He also asked me to pray about the matter. I had already shared the news with my family but had not given it serious thought. I had never prayed about going into any job before. Things just happened as I went into teaching. It was the best option for me at the time, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. In 1981, I was invited to be an editor and copywriter at Longman educational textbook publishers. I was thrilled since I loved books. Ten years later in 1991, Shadreck had started a telecommunications venture but was not happy with the management that was in place. He was still holding his old job since he did not want to risk leaving a secure job for an entity that might flounder. So, we discussed the matter and agreed that it was better for me to leave my precious job and look after this wobbly business. I did so reluctantly. But God in his grace nurtured the venture, and I began to enjoy it. I learned so many management skills while I was in that position. About three years later, Shadreck left his job and came to run his company. He was managing director, and I was director of administration. We encouraged and supported one another during bad times and rejoiced and thanked God during the good times. Shadreck did not at all entertain losing his right-hand person, and little had I guessed that Telecontract was a training school for me for other things.

As I prayed one day, God gently reminded me of the song I had recited daily early in January. How could I have forgotten so soon? It rang in my ears. “Here am I Lord, send me!” That jolted me into a panic. The Lord seemed to be saying, “So . . . you were paying me lip-service, woman?” I said, “No, my Lord. I do want to serve you. You know how I always try, but a full-time position, Lord?! I hadn’t bargained for that Lord.” He said, “Who is making the decision?” I said feebly, “Lord, I am only but a woman, a lay person, and not trained in theology.” He said, “So?” I sweated. My mouth went dry. Where could I run to? Jonah was able to jump into a ship sailing to Tashish. I had no hiding place, nor was I guaranteed that a big fish would swallow me and spit me on dry land. I might actually be welcomed by a hungry shark. It was a strangled voice that strained out of trembling lips to say, “Yes, Lord.” I sometimes wonder whether God, sitting in his awesome throne, becomes cross at our empty promises or whether he just allows us to take our wayward course, then chuckles benevolently as he gently chides us and draws us into the straight and narrow way.

I started working full time at IBS Zimbabwe on May 1, 1996. I had been one of the Ndebele Bible Review team members and editors since 1983, when the organization was still called Living Bibles International. The mission of IBS is to faithfully translate, publish and reach out with God’s Word so that people around the world may become disciples of Jesus Christ. My main responsibility

I had sat there thinking hard about what special things I could do to serve the Lord God, who had done so many marvelous things for me.



As God trained me at Telecontract, Longman and even in my teaching career, in preparation for my work with IBS, I feel strongly that God is giving me this opportunity for another role for his kingdom.

Women in leadership

Laura Short has recently joined the World Council of Churches as a consultant to the Decade to Overcome Violence. Laura is from Goshen, Indiana. She is seconded to the WCC by MCC and Mennonite conferences in Germany and the Netherlands.

at IBS Zimbabwe is to develop, control, administer and review the total program. In 1997, I was given the added responsibility of supervising the Chichewa New Testament project in Malawi, which has just been completed and is awaiting printing. In Zimbabwe, the translation of a new Ndebele Bible version has been completed and is awaiting printing. The new Shona Bible version should be completed by March 2002. We have teams of translators, reviewers, editors and proof readers who work with us on a part-time basis.

It has been a challenge to find able, God-fearing, prayerful and committed people who have a passion to see the Bible in today's language, in the hands of their people. The translation process is long and painstaking, but when a task is done and completed well, it gives a wonderful feeling of achievement. My passion is to see the Ndebele and Shona Bibles, as well as the Chichewa New Testament, in the hands of the people who are hungry for the Word of God. The Word of God transforms lives, and no amount of material possession can surpass the joy of seeing lives changed and those lives also impacting others for the kingdom. The joy presented by each individual person brought into the fold is like that of the arrival of a long awaited newborn child.

There are other related projects that we are doing. One is the publication of Sunday school materials in both Shona and Ndebele, two of our main indigenous languages. These materials are being prepared as a way of providing salvation for children, a way of molding their characters, giving them values that are lasting, and building a firm foundation for their lives. We are producing this in partnership with Christian Learning Materials Centre (CLMC) in Nairobi, Kenya, and Christian Audio Visual Action (CAVA) in Harare, Zimbabwe. In all translation work, we are forever grateful to the many partners who provide funding.

What has all this done for me? When I first came to IBS full time, I spiritually wept because I felt so inadequate. I was a woman who had been full of confidence

before. Because I had read the Bible through twice (dwelling on the favorite and well-known stories, and only giving a cursory glance through the less known and heavy going, such as the minor prophets and Revelation), I had thought I knew the Word of God. Coming into this job made me realize I knew absolutely nothing. I frantically searched for a university I could enroll in to really delve into theology. God pointed me to the Bible Study Fellowship program, and through that I have been steadily growing in God's grace and experiencing a deeper knowledge of his Word. This equips me well for soul-winning. The more God reveals his mysterious and amazing ways, the more I want to get to know him better and do his will.

I already had a personal ministry of giving Scriptures to people. But, since I joined IBS, and noted how even ordinary people in foreign countries donated money to make this ministry possible, I have encouraged my own family and other people close to me to do the same. It is not how many gold nuggets one has in his/her pocket that move mountains but the willingness to send those few dollars and cents. We now have our own little ministry to support those who preach the Gospel, especially in the remote country areas where people are less privileged and are too poor to buy Bibles and other scriptures of their own. Our children know they need to give something out of their pocket money, outside of the usual tithe, to fulfill this ministry. It has become a joy even to them to partner in this way with those in the field.

I have held various leadership positions in my congregation and community. I agree with other views that good leadership is lacking in our continent, hence lack of good governance. I am currently engaged in a master's degree course on a part-time basis with Africa Leadership and Management Academy (ALMA), established by the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. The vision of ALMA is to build leaders of integrity who will impact Africa and the world for Christ. As God trained me at Telecontract, Longman and in my teaching career in preparation for my work with IBS, I feel strongly that God

is giving me this opportunity for another role for his kingdom. I have a dream, as I have had other dreams before, but this one is not yet crystal clear. All I know is, I serve a God who has had and continues to have a wonderful purpose for my life. I now say with more confidence, "Where he leads, I will follow." I pray for a spirit

of discernment so that I hear only the one voice of the good Shepherd. I trust his purpose for my life. One of my favorite scriptures is, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." ♦

Bearing one another's burdens

People of all ages have basic needs which are important for their psychological survival. If they are deprived of these needs, many experience serious psychological problems. These needs are: the need for power (to be in control of themselves and their life, the ability to plan and make changes in society as well as to influence events); the need for affection (to socialize, to be noticed, to be needed and loved); and the need for affiliation (to belong to a group, we are all social animals, we need other people).

I found that a large number of my patients in the psychiatric hospital where I worked for seven years had a need for affection. Most of them had broken down because of a stressful lifestyle and become depressed. They felt that people did not care for them or that they were not needed. I particularly enjoyed working in admission wards where there was a lot of activity. They were uninhibited and said a lot of things, some embarrassing to their relatives. We had all ages. The teenagers were mostly high school age or first-year university students. Their problems tended to be fear of failure during final examinations, parental expectations that pressured them to pass, and attention-seeking behavior including suicide attempts. Men tended to be schizophrenic with some form of depression. The majority of women suffered from reactive depression mostly related to marital problems.

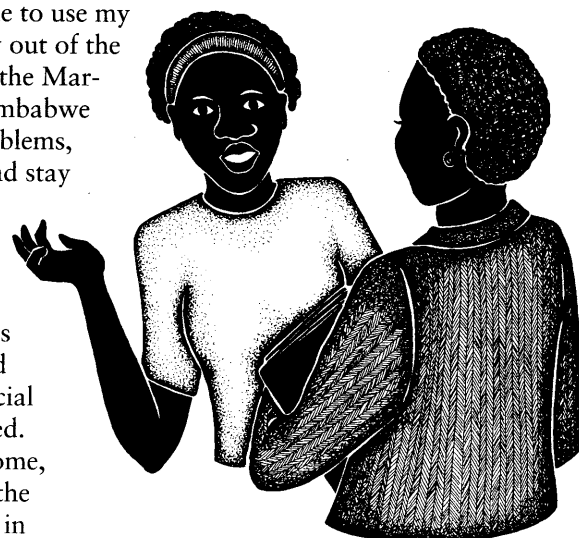
I noticed that people benefitted from family counseling. Some would fully recover, but others kept coming back because of the stigma associated with mental illness in Zimbabwe. The bulk of the people that

came back either did not get support from their family or community, or if they were married, their husbands sent them away saying they could no longer live with a "lunatic." The reason for the others that came back was summarized by one lady I interviewed who always seemed excited to be in the hospital. She said, "Out there, if I laugh because somebody told a joke, everybody at home gets worried. The same happens when I am quiet. They whisper to each other wondering whether I have taken my medication that day. If there are visitors and I actively participate in the conversation, they look for a way to exclude me from the group because it is believed that I might say something that would embarrass them. I am not allowed to be normal. You respect me as a human being, a person with dignity, and you listen to me. If you had to choose, where would you rather be?" You can guess what my answer was. So she continued, "Then you shouldn't be surprised why I keep coming back."

I felt that the Lord wanted me to use my skills to help these ladies stay out of the psychiatric hospital. I joined the Marriage Guidance Society of Zimbabwe to help women deal with problems, open communication lines and stay out of the hospital. We went through a six-month course on marital counseling. The Marriage Guidance Society believes that marital problems involve both the husband and wife and counseling is beneficial when both people are involved. Most men are unwilling to come, and if they do, they feel that the counselor has no role to play in

by Flora Dlodlo

Flora Dlodlo lives in Bulawayo with her husband Mqhele and their two daughters. She is a Psychiatric and State Registered Nurse. Currently she is employed by the Public Service Commission as a management training officer. She is a member of the Bulawayo Central Brethren in Christ church.



I joined the Marriage Guidance Society of Zimbabwe to help women deal with problems, open communication lines and stay out of the hospital.

their problems, preferring to go to the family circle for assistance. However, some families take it seriously and are able to improve their relationships. Some who had decided to divorce are able to mend their relationship. Others find out after counseling that it is impossible to stay together and part ways.

Counseling requires a lot of time, energy and perseverance. It also requires confidentiality because delicate matters are discussed which would be damaging if revealed. It is a tiring job but fulfilling when the problem is resolved. Its aim should always be to empower the person to identify the problem they have and find a solution for it. The role of the counselor is to facilitate this process. Most clients want the counselor to solve problems for them. They feel that they have failed and

that the counselor, as an expert, should take over.

Counseling can be strenuous if you have a job and a family. Because it drains one's energy, it can interfere with the quality time you give to your family. It is important that one concentrate during counseling. The client can tell if you are preoccupied with other concerns, and that can destroy the relationship, making the client's situation worse. As a result, I found that as my children were becoming teenagers, I needed time with them. So I have taken a break from counseling, but I still continue to offer assistance when it does not interfere with family time. As the children become older and leave home, I have plans to resume counseling for I find it very fulfilling. They say, "Once a counselor, always a counselor!" ♦

Trainer of leaders

by Nellie Mlotshwa

Nellie Mlotshwa holds a B.A. from the Theological College of Zimbabwe and an Advanced Leadership Certificate with Haggai Institute, Singapore. She is involved in various church ministries including counseling. She was married to the late Rev. Peter Mlotshwa and has six children.

I was a school teacher for 12 years before joining Ekuphileni Bible Institute as a lecturer. The education officer for our school district, George Bundy, used to organize Vacation Bible Schools for the teachers and other members. As time went on, the Theological Administrative Committee of my Brethren in Christ church invited me to join the above institution as full-time lecturer to train leaders. Having accepted the invitation, I quit my teaching job to join the Leadership Training Program in 1969. I have been with this institution ever since.

My training with Haggai Institute for Advanced Leadership Training has gone a long way to boost my involvement in this ministry. Haggai Institute re-sharpened my tools and gave me more training in new skills which I have used and valued a lot to this day.

This special call to train leaders has presented numerous challenges to me of which I shall highlight only a few. The first outstanding challenge is that of trying

to produce highly skilled leaders. Quality leaders that make a difference are desperately needed world wide in our day. To be able to train and impact the lives of the trainees in the servant leadership of Jesus is no small challenge. To be able to send them out into the field without fear of failure calls for faith.

Each year we receive students with various talents to be developed. Each of the lecturers is tasked to identify and develop the diverse gifts that the trainees display. It is important to strive to train them according to their gift mix. Our students display gifts of administration, pastoring, evangelism, mission work, teaching, etc. Our method of training them together regardless of their diverse gifts has worked even though we feel that training them separately would better sharpen them along the line of their call. It is important, for instance, to train evangelists separate from teachers, etc. Although we are understaffed and financially unable to do that, this has not set us back because the Institution has produced such leaders as pas-

tors, evangelists, church bishops, administrators, teachers, and so on.

Sending the trainees out to the church that is sometimes too bankrupt to absorb them has not watered down our cause. This challenge has helped us to introduce practical skills courses such as drip irrigation, carpentry, wire making, sewing, and tie and dye to help some to go into voluntary service with the church while tent making to earn a living. Many have learned not to be a liability to the church. Those who have joined the secular world because they have not been absorbed in church ministries have been an asset where they have been planted by the Lord. Some have become industrial chaplains, army chaplains, Sunday school teachers, etc. while employed somewhere else.

Another big challenge is to be able to make good selections as to who comes into the program. The pastors and ministers in charge of our church districts do the selection and then hand them over to us. We depend on their decisions and then continue to study the candidates as we go.

Balancing my full-time involvement with leadership training and family life has not been easy. There have been quite taxing times to try and be fair to both ministry and family. There have been times of sacrificing family time and finances for this training. For instance, I have had to travel for purposes of deputation. If the program has no funds, one has to make efforts to personally fund the program. This, though, has not left us stranded or bankrupt as a family. The Lord has provided in ways untold. Family members, especially my children, have taken it upon themselves to support me financially, spiritually and morally. This has kept me going joyfully. My children have given towards some of our travels, purchase of supplies and other projects to boost the training ministry.

My church work leans heavily on my involvement with leadership training. At times, we go out on gospel teams for outreach. We have also introduced community service where we join hands with the local churches over weekends to fulfill various needs in the community. For instance we visit the sick and the elderly in their homes to render social services needed. At

times we teach Sunday school or get involved with youth and women's work.

This involvement has served as an eye opener to help me see the need for quality leadership, not only for our church but nationwide and even worldwide. I have built close relations even beyond our borders. Some denominations have called upon me to help here and there. For instance, the Bulawayo Baptist Church once asked me to go on an outing with their young couples for a weekend of counseling. I have been invited to speak to the Women's Meeting of the Apostolic Faith Church on several occasions. The Mennonite World Conference also asked me to be one of their speakers. The Dutch Reformed Church once invited me as their speaker at one of their Women's Sessions. I have also enjoyed being a speaker or counselor at our church conferences, youth camps and women's meetings. I thank God for all these opportunities of service.

The Theological College of Zimbabwe has asked me to teach marriage and family courses at the college. Even though I have done these as modules, I have been exposed to many different cultures as I do my research in preparation for these assignments. These have been quite enriching experiences.

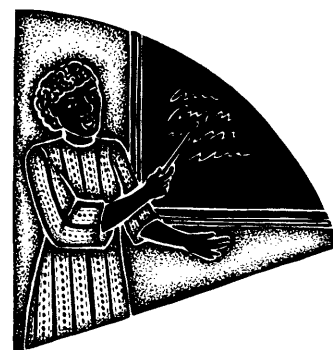
My involvement in all of these experiences has widened my horizon and scope of understanding. I have thoroughly enjoyed my involvement and warm relations both in the church and outside, even though there is too much to do sometimes. I have realized that we are not only training leaders for our church but for the world at large and for various ministries.

I have several visions for the future. One of them is to see our development of a specialization program succeed. We also have been working on in service training, but my vision is that it will expand to include those from other denominations willing to train.

Women have been trained. I wish they would, in a more aggressive way, accept the call with their husbands. They have filled positions of responsibility yet I continue to encourage them to feel called like men are. ❖



Quality leaders that can lead to make a difference are desperately needed world wide in our day.





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NEWS VERBS

WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT

Looking Forward

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MAY-JUNE 2002

Barriers to women
in leadership



JULY-AUGUST 2002

Women and AIDS



SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2002

Women who have
left the church

As of the **May-June 2002 issue**, the subscription price for *Women's Concerns Report* will increase to \$15U.S./\$18Cdn. for one year and \$25U.S./\$30Cdn. for two years. There has also been an increase to the cost of multiple copies. Subscription fees were first established in 1994 and have not been increased since that time. Though MCC continues to subsidize the publication of this periodical, we hope that this increase will bring us a little closer to meeting our expenses. Thank you for your understanding.

The Color of Violence II: Violence Against Women of Color conference will be held at the University of Illinois, Chicago on March 15-17, 2002. This is the second conference of its kind to discuss and strategize around the connections between sexual/ domestic violence, racism and colonialism in the lives of women of color. For more information, call 415 553-3837 or email incite_national@yahoo.com.

Canadian Mennonite University is seeking to fill faculty positions for September 2002 in the areas of Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies, Conflict Resolution Studies, Arts and Humanities, and Music. Please see their website at www.cmu.ca for more information. Canadian Mennonite University is an association of three colleges in Winnipeg, Manitoba committed to the biblical faith and rooted in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition. ◆